

DAIRY FOODS AND YOUR SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICY

Executive Summary

By the 2006-07 school year, every school in the federal meal programs must develop a policy for (1) nutrition education, (2) physical activity and (3) nutrition guidelines for all foods sold on campus (not just in the cafeteria). It's up to the school what those guidelines are.

Milk can and should be an important part of a wellness policy. School is where many students get virtually their entire dairy consumption for the day. **The National Dairy Council® (NDC)** would like to help make milk work in schools!

Kids Need Milk – A Nutrient-Rich Powerhouse

- At the same time that **childhood obesity** has been on the rise, milk consumption has been on the decline.
- Among kids 6-11, 71% of girls and 62% of boys don't meet calcium requirements. In ages 12-19, 68% of males and 88% of females don't meet calcium requirements.
- Three daily servings of dairy – as recommended by the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans – provide a major portion of the Daily Value for critical nutrients.
- Major medical and health professional groups like the American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Dietetic Association and the National Medical Association support **3-A-Day of Dairy™**.
- Dairy's health benefits include **bone health, lower risk of hypertension** and, as new science shows, **healthy weight**.
- Dairy contributes only 9% of calories in the food supply, but 73% of the calcium.
- And it's not just calcium – for example, the need for more potassium was a big reason the new Dietary Guidelines increased the number of dairy servings suggested for most Americans.

Improved School Milk Can Help You Increase Meal Program Participation

- In a **pilot test with 100,000 students**, NDC and the School Nutrition Association helped schools put milk in a single-serve plastic container, add an extra flavor, insure proper refrigeration and merchandise milk in attractive retail-style coolers.
- **Elementary schools in the study increased milk sales by 15%; secondary schools saw a 22% increase.** (The average across all schools was 18%).
- In these schools, **participation in school lunch programs rose by 4.8 percentage points in secondary schools.** In elementary schools, where participation was already at very high levels, participation rose 1.5 percentage points. Those kids weren't just getting more milk – overall diets improved through balanced meals.
- Even before wellness policies take effect, **hundreds of school districts nationwide are switching** to the New Look of School Milk to meet nutritional goals and gain consumption increases to balance revenues.

Design a Wellness Policy so it Doesn't Accidentally Discourage Milk Consumption

- Promoting healthy dairy is a good way to **reduce consumption of empty-calorie beverages**.
- **Milk is a marker for a healthy diet.** In analysis of unpublished data from NHANES II and III, milk drinkers had significantly lower body weight and body mass index, and lower “bad” cholesterol, than children who didn't drink milk.
- If you **limit kids' choices** to milk varieties they don't drink at home, they may be less likely to drink milk, and more likely to choose a less-healthy beverage. 2% milk is consumed at about three times the volume of 1%; many kids are used to drinking it.
- Many groups are interested in promoting low-fat (1%) and fat-free milk. Schools can choose to promote these varieties without prohibiting other fat levels.
- For wellness, milk **flavors** are a good decision despite some added sugar. A study found children who drink flavored milk got more calcium than those who didn't...but **no more added sugars, and no more total fat**.
- Schools may want to avoid extremely low **limits on total sugars or added sugars** that could keep flavored milk away from students. In addition, by keeping sugar limits at a reasonable level, students will continue to enjoy healthy and great-tasting products such as yogurt.
- **Extremely low serving-size limits** on vended or a la carte products could hamper ability to use milk to boost wellness, since many commercially-available single-serve products are larger than 8 ounces. **Milk vending** will soon be protected by law! Beginning in July 2005, an exclusive beverage sales contract can't be used to limit school's ability to sell milk anytime, anywhere on school property or at school events.
- **Cheese** is a nutrient-dense, healthy snack that is popular among kids. Frequent cheese consumers had better levels of “good” cholesterol (HDL). Cheese's low lactose allows lactose-intolerant individuals to get calcium and phosphorus.
- Some schools with upper limits on fat and saturated fat content exempt nuts from these limits – and the same logic would suggest **exempting cheese** as well. Like nuts, cheese helps schools promote healthy snacking.

Please use this information to get involved with the development of school wellness policies in your community, whether it's attending school board meetings, writing a letter, or interacting with the school food service team. Contact your local Dairy Council® at www.NutritionExplorations.org for more information.